

REMARKS

Claims 1-24 are pending in the application. Applicants gratefully acknowledge Examiner's indication that Claim 12 is allowed and that Claims 15 and 21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form as suggested in the Office Action.

By the above amendment, Claims 14, 14, 18, 20, 21 and 24 have been amended and Claims 1-11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 22 and 23 have been canceled without prejudice. In addition, specification amendments were made to amend the Abstract and provide updated application information. No new matter has been introduced by virtue of the above amendments.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the rejections and objections set forth in the Office Action based on the above amendments and following remarks.

Specification Objection

The Office Action indicates that the Application does not contain an abstract. Applicants respectfully disagree. Indeed, the current application was filed under 35 U.S.C. 371 based on International Application No. PCT/US99/22925, filed on October 1, 1999. The Abstract for this application is the Abstract that was filed with the above International Application as amended by the United States ISA (International Search Authority) as per Rule 38.2(b) (see, e.g., WO 00/21075). By the above amendment, Applicants have amended the Abstract to remove reference numerals required under the PCT rules. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection is requested.

Claim Objections

Claims 6 and 13 were objected to for the reasons set forth on page 2 of the Office Action. Claims 6 and 13 have been canceled without prejudice rendering such objections moot.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the claim objections is requested.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

Although Applicants respectfully disagree with the claim rejections, the claims have been amended to place the application in condition for allowance. In particular, claims 1-11 have been canceled without prejudice. Claims 15 and 21 have been rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of respective base claims 13 and 19 (which have been canceled without prejudice). In addition, all remaining dependent claims depend directly or indirectly from claims 15 and 21. Accordingly, the claims are believed to be in condition for allowance over the cited art of record. Therefore, withdrawal of the claim rejections is requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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